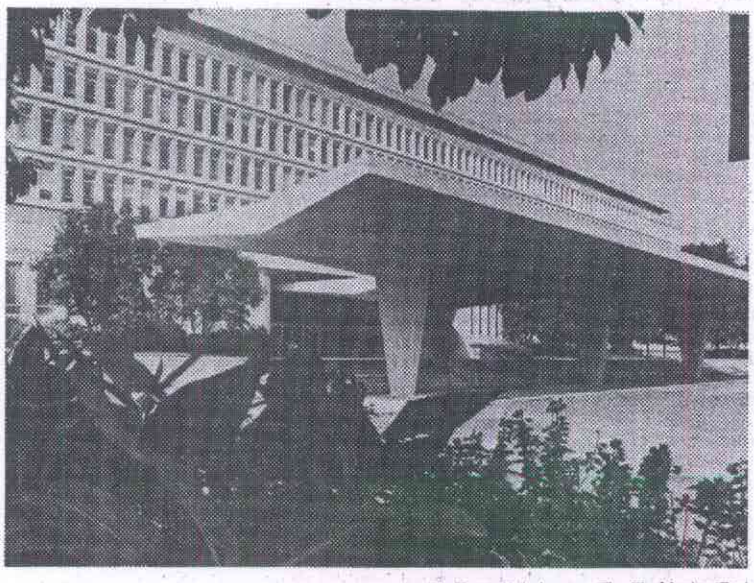
Caution: The CIA May Be Danger



By Harry Naltchayan—The Washington Post

An OSHA inspection at CIA headquarters turned up a long list of safety no-nos.

By Ward Sinclair
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Agent from OSHA, the fellow with the deerstalker cap and gum-soled shoes has infiltrated that last great safehouse of the spy world and found a gem of a secret:

The CIA may be dangerous to its own employes' health—a finding that has eluded the best of its other acronymic adversaries, from the KGB on down.

An inspection by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration at the Central Intelligence Agency's supersecret complex at Langley has turned up a long list of occupational safety no nos.

Now don't misunderstand. The CIA does have safety and health staffers out at Langley. But OSHA found that their duties involved them in other matters.

They were, for example, dealing with bomb disposal—health and safety in a way, but not what OSHA had in mind.

And they were involved in letter-bomb training and checking CIA employes for classified documents and carrying out other security duties. ies.

OSHA's inspector uncovered a raft of job hazards: no signs on exits, loose wires, improperly stored flammable liquids, unmounted fire extin-

ous to Its Own Health

guishers, excessive noise, workers exposed to a dangerous cancer-causing chemical (carbon tetrachloride).

But there's more. In a refrain that rings a bit familiar, the CIA is saying that a law, a presidential order and a set of regulations on safety may apply to other federal agencies, but certainly not to the CIA.

Confronted by the Agent from OSHA, the CIA responded with a collective shrug of the shoulders.

The existence of an OSHA report on health and safety conditions at the CIA came after the health Research group of Public Citizen, Ralph Nader's hit team, filed a freedom-of-information request.

Dr. Sidney M. Wolfe of the HRG, smiling secretly, in the spirit of things, was taken aback. "If the CIA can't even provide a safe place for themselves, how can they protect us?" he wondered.

What bothered him more yesterday was "the double standard of all this—it shows that some federal employes get less protection that private-sector employes. Self-enforcement of the safety law is just not a good idea."

Although OSHA has no real enforcement power over CIA or other federal agencies, it has a duty—imposed by law, regulation and presidential order—to monitor the bureaucracy and see that safety and health programs are maintained.

The 1970 OSHA law makes it plain that every federal agency must set up and maintain a comprehensive occupational safety and health program for its employes.

OSHA's report, however, said CIA had failed to do that and had developed no procedures to inform the director of progress being made in protecting employes.

Confronted by the Agent from OSHA, who read the law and the regulations and the presidential order, the CIA responded with a collective shrug of the shoulders.

CIA didn't think it was mandatory, the report said.